

2004 Annual Report Highlights

IMPORTANT FACTS ABOUT THE 2004 INDEX TOTAL

The Crime Index is composed of selected offenses used to gauge fluctuations in the overall volume and rate of crime reported to police. The offenses included are the violent crimes of murder, rape, robbery, and aggravated assault; and the property crimes of burglary, larceny, and auto theft. The Crime Index was developed by the Federal Bureau of Investigation's Uniform Crime Reporting program to standardize the way in which law enforcement agencies report crime statistics.

- Despite the fact that the 4,319 index crimes reported in Cambridge in 2004 represents the second lowest total recorded in the City in the past 40 years; serious crimes increased 9% when compared with the 2003 numbers.
- The increase of 350 index crimes in 2004 over 2003 should be tempered with the knowledge that the 2003 Uniform Crime Reporting number was the lowest figure reported to the FBI since the 1950s.
- The 9% increase in serious crime in Cambridge in 2004 was driven by a 14% rise in burglary and an 11% surge in larcenies.
- Further analysis indicates that the 7% increase in robbery was counterbalanced with an 8% decline in aggravated assault to produce a 1% decrease in violent crime.

MURDER:

- For the first time in 20 years and for only the second time in 45 years, no murders were recorded in the City of Cambridge.
- The most common weapon used in murders in Cambridge since 1990 has been a knife which was used in 29% of the incidents.
- Murders in Cambridge predominately fall into three distinct scenarios: domestic situations, drug or gang related altercations, and homeless against homeless street fights.
- Alexander Pring Wilson, arrested for stabbing a local Cambridge teen in April of 2003, was found guilty of manslaughter and was sentenced to 6 to 8 years in prison. An appeal has been filed in this case.
- Nationally, cities with population above 100,000, average 10 murders per year.
- Since 1990, 55% of the victims of murder in Cambridge have been males (average age 29) and the remaining 45% have been females (average age 42).

RAPE:

- There were 10 rapes registered in Cambridge in 2004 as compared to seven incidents in 2003. Last year's total of seven rapes was the lowest number reported for this crime in the City in over 30 years.
- Seven of the 10 rapes in 2004 were completed acts and three of the incidents were categorized as attempts.
- The victim in all reported rapes in Cambridge in 2004 had a prior acquaintance with the rapist.
- Prior to 1998, Cambridge averaged four to seven stranger-to-stranger rapes each year. In the past six years there have been seven stranger-to-stranger rapes in the City. Five of these incidents were classified as blitz type rapes and two were home invasions.
- Since 1980, there has been only one stranger to stranger "street blitz" rape pattern in Cambridge. This case was called "the rainy day rapist" and involved a suspect who preyed on victims in the Fresh Pond Reservation on rainy days.

ROBBERY

- The 16 additional robberies recorded in Cambridge in 2004 when compared with 2003 represent a 7% increase for this index crime. The majority of this increase can be traced to a 46% increase in commercial robberies. Street robbery decreased by three incidents when compared with the 2003 totals to register a 2% decline.
- The increase in commercial robberies can be attributed to a surge in gas station and taxi cab robberies between August and October and a year-long trend of note-passing bank robbers.
- The section of Area 4 north of Central Square, the periphery of Harvard Square, Upper Cambridgeport, the 300 to 400 blocks of Rindge Ave. and the 500 to 600 block of Massachusetts Ave. were classified as hotspots for street robberies in Cambridge during 2004.

BURGLARY

- The City of Cambridge experienced a 13% increase in housebreaks in 2004 when compared with 2003. The 585 reported incidents were well above the five-year average of 513 housebreaks annually.
- The increase in housebreaks was fueled by a major pattern in the Peabody neighborhood in the Spring months and a significant series of daytime burglaries in Cambridgeport and Riverside at the end of the year.
- The major commercial burglary pattern identified in 2004 was associated with a series of weekend breaks in the 500 to 600 blocks of Central Square in October. This pattern was eradicated with the arrest of two well-known professional burglars in November.
- The five-year trend of declining commercial burglaries in Harvard Square continued in 2004.
- On the average, 8% to 10% of all housebreaks in Cambridge are perpetrated by family, friends, common tenants and houseguests and other acquaintances.

LARCENY

- There were 572 larcenies from buildings reported in 2004. This total represents a 10% increase from 2003 and is above the five-year average of 450 incidents.
- The crime of Larceny consistently accounts for between 60% to 65% of all index crimes in Cambridge each year. The 2,654 larcenies in 2004, represented 61% of the serious crime reported in the City. Larceny increased 11% in 2004 when compared with the 2003 totals which were at a 30-year low.
- Larceny from motor vehicles increased by 77 incidents in 2004 to record a 12% increase when compared with 2003. This target crime type has consistently averaged close to 20% of all the serious crime recorded in Cambridge each year. In 2004, larceny from motor vehicles accounted for 17% of the index total.
- The three major hotspots for larceny from buildings in 2004 were Cambridgeside Galleria Mall, Bally's Health Club, and Mount Auburn Hospital.
- The theft of tires and rims from Hondas emerged as a trend in 2003 and continued to escalate throughout 2004.
- The theft of Audi headlights as a trend in larceny from motor vehicles is not only an emerging problem in Cambridge but has surfaced in the surrounding communities of Somerville, Boston and Brookline as well as in the greater New York City area.
- The most common method of entry into motor vehicles is by smashing one or more of its windows. This method was reported in 33% of the larcenies from motor vehicles.

AUTO THEFT

- Hondas and Toyotas have consistently accounted for nearly 40% of all stolen vehicles in Cambridge over the past five years. Hondas alone made up 27% of the total auto thefts in 2004.
- The most targeted model in 2004 was the Honda Civic, followed by the Accord and Acura Integra.
- High-priced, luxury model vehicles are seldom stolen in Cambridge.
- Aside from recoveries within Cambridge, the majority of cars recovered are found in Boston neighborhoods.